

00482

,

1961/08/01



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~

August 1, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McGEORGE BUNDY
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Recent Developments in Laos Situation

Geneva Conference

On July 19 the Conference agreed on a procedure to consider in restricted plenary sessions the Soviet, French, American and Indian draft documents that have been introduced. The drafts will be considered simultaneously provision by provision in accordance with a schedule prepared by the co-chairmen. If no agreement is reached on a particular provision, further discussion of it is to continue for not more than one additional day, after which the Conference is to proceed to the next provision.

A list of items for discussion was drawn up by the co-chairmen on July 25 and substantive discussion began on July 26. The list is divided into sections covering draft declarations on the neutrality of Laos, the withdrawal of foreign forces, and the international control machinery in that order.

Ban Namone Talks

Small skirmishes continue to take place, but there have been no significant violations of the cease-fire since Ban Pa Dong six weeks ago. The cease-fire talks by the military subcommittee at Ban Namone have been continued on a somewhat erratic basis, and the Royal Lao Government and the Souvanna delegations have each submitted draft regulations for the cease-fire. We are concerned about the RLG draft which was submitted without consultation with us and which ascribes a weaker role to the ICC than we are seeking in Geneva. The Souvanna draft is also full of pitfalls. The ICC is meanwhile inactive.

In the political committee, the ICC presence has been at issue, the RLG having refused to participate without an ICC presence to which the other side has objected. The issue has been dropped momentarily. It has been agreed to discuss matters relating to the formation of a coalition government, but no agreement has been reached on the order of discussion.

Internal Political Developments

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

- 2 -

Internal Political Developments

On July 30 the National Congress, (i.e., the King's Council and the National Assembly in joint session) passed unanimously a constitutional amendment which authorizes the Congress to ask the King to take upon himself the duties of the government or to appoint a government of his own choosing. In case of acceptance by the King, the government in power must hand over its powers to the King. There is no indication whether the King will accept these powers. In the past he has been reluctant to take decisive action.

Phnom Penh Negotiations

Prince Boun Oum and General Phoumi, accompanied by thirty-six leading Lao politicians and military officers, flew to Phnom Penh on July 31 to meet with Souvanna Phouma, pursuant to the provisions of the Zurich agreement, for discussions on the formation of a government of national union. Souphanouvong has refused to attend on the grounds that these talks should be carried out at Ban Namone and among the Princes' deputies initially.

Boun Oum and Souvanna have not yet met. Lower level meetings took place yesterday and were scheduled for this morning. Phoumi is not optimistic, and has asked Ambassador Brown for maximum possible assurances of US support whether the Phnom Penh negotiations succeed or not.

There have been a number of varying reports regarding the initial proposals both sides may make. However, it seems clear that Souvanna will aim at a government with himself as Prime Minister, with 6 - 8 of his followers as members and 3 members each from the Boun Oum faction and the NLHX. Souvanna remains convinced that he alone can save Laos from falling to the Communists.

Donald Maclean
for

L. D. Battle
Executive Secretary

SECRET